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ABSTRACT

The importance of evaluating student interns as part of a regular performance appraisal system for all employees is discussed, along with the role of the internship coordinator or faculty sponsor. The first step is deciding what should be measured: interns' personal characteristics, job performance, and results. The most useful form of performance appraisal for student interns is based on behaviors the student displays when accomplishing a particular task. By establishing a rating format for each task, evaluation can be clear and specific to enable students and supervisors to discuss performance and problem areas. Types of rater errors that may occur include leniency error, central tendency, halo effect, horn effect, latest behavior, and spillover effect. The main uses of evaluation for students are feedback and providing faculty members information on which to assign a grade. It is important that the student see the evaluation and discuss it with the supervisor. The faculty coordinator/sponsor should work with employers to familiarize them with evaluation needs and the format. A draft of an evaluation form that incorporates these evaluation principles is provided, along with four evaluation forms used by three universities and a learning center. (SW)

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PANEL Resource Paper #7

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by Dr. Sharon Rubin

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PANEL Resource Paper #7

PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL: A Guide to Better Supervisor Evaluation Processes

by Dr. Sharon Rubin

Dr. Sharon Rubin is the Director of Experiential Learning Programs at the University of Maryland, College Park.

PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PRACTICES: A GUIDE TO
BETTER SUPERVISOR EVALUATION PROCESSES

by
DR. SHARON RUBIN, DIRECTOR
EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PROGRAMS, UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

> Ann was a good student worker for us. She came every time she was scheduled, was punctual, and worked hard. She paid attention to instructions, and she was always dependable.
>
> We will be forever grateful to Joe for his energy and his resourcefulness. He took on whatever we threw his way and never complained. We were able to finish about six things we would never have accomplished without him.
>
> Tom was a good team player. He was willing to cooperate and to accept supervision. Because he got along with others so well, he was a pleasure to have around.

These comments are typical of the evaluations faculty receive from supervisors of student interns. The English teacher in me cries out, "too general; where are your specific details?" The evaluator in me exclaims with frustration, "How can you assign a grade to someone based on punctuality, or cheerfulness, or team spirit--or, for that matter, such other Boy Scout virtues as conduct, attitude, industriousness, self-control, loyalty, or application to duty?" Yet as I think about the problem of good supervisor evaluation, I have to relieve supervisors, at least somewhat, from the responsibility for such general, useless evaluations. Our own evaluation form (see Appendix A: UMCP form) asks about motivation, attentiveness, competence, and attendance, in a format that almost guarantees that nobody will get a rating less than "very good," and that nothing of controversy will get back to the faculty member responsible for the grading. In fact, unless the student has had a terrible attendance record or has been completely incompetent, most supervisors will send a positive rating back to school with the student. This generosity is bad for the student, for the faculty sponsor,

and ultimately, for the organization itself.

There are three causes, I believe, for many evaluation problems. First, most student interns are providing a real service to employers. For no pay, or for little pay, students are filling in where needed, finishing projects that are useful to the organization, and becoming either potential employees or, at the very least, community members knowledgeable about the organization. A work supervisor doesn't want to make such helpers dissatisfied or unhappy.

If my assumption that supervisors will not act in the most rational and "professional" manner seems a bit farfetched to you, think of your own relationship with your subordinates. How often have you "let something go this time" so as not to destroy the harmony of the office? This brings up the second, more significant, problem. Evaluation of student interns should be a part of a regular performance appraisal system for all employees. Although such a system nominally exists in most organizations, almost all personnel texts start the unit on appraisal with a generalization that performance appraisal systems usually are not fully implemented, are not carried out by specially trained supervisors, do not give employees adequate opportunity for response, and are often conducted and received with hostility and/or anxiety. It is an unusual organization that has come to grips with its own evaluation system, so it is no wonder that student interns are not adequately evaluated. To make matters worse, an intern coordinator or faculty sponsor is not a member of the organization but is imposing requirements for evaluation as an outsider.

Third, even if a good performance appraisal system does

exist, students, faculty, and organization supervisors often start out with very different ideas about the major use of an internship. To a student, an internship is an opportunity for "real" work, and for professional direction and training, yet also for autonomy. To a faculty member, an internship must relate theory and practice and must support learning objectives. To a supervisor, the way in which a student's skills match the job to be done and the degree to which the student will be reliable and responsible are paramount. Therefore, when evaluations are based on different assumptions, there is bound to be a certain ambiguity about what is to be evaluated.

Given these three problems, is there anything an internship coordinator or faculty sponsor can do to improve the process? I believe there is.

First, it is important to decide what it is we want to measure. In analyzing our form, for example (see Appendix A: UMCP form), I discovered the same basic confusion that exists in many forms between evaluation of personal characteristics, job performance, and results (see Appendices E, D: Delaware form, NCSL form). For instance, it is very typical for a form to concentrate on such qualities as punctuality, effort, conduct, dependability, attitude, industriousness, leadership, self-control, loyalty, etc. However, we must recognize that a high rating on any of these personal traits does not necessarily correlate with good performance. Anyone who has ever had a student who has been given a C on a paper complain, "but I tried so hard," understands how easy it is for someone to confuse effort and results. Furthermore, evaluation of personal characteristics gets a supervisor off the hook by emphasizing who the student is instead of what the student

has done and what the results have been. Since most students are trying hard to be nice people in their first professional work experiences, it is not difficult to be generous with praise.

If we say, "then let's evaluate results--what in business might be an improved profit level or sales volume, or better quality control," we discover that student work cannot be easily judged by result. Students are usually not in a position to be in control of results, and they are working at certain tasks only for a limited time. Still, a simple, modified system of management by objectives can be used. We can ask, "What do you hope to learn?" and then, "Did you learn it?" and "What do you want to accomplish?" and then "Did you accomplish it?"

The most useful form of performance appraisal for student interns is one built around job performance, the set of behaviors the student displays when accomplishing a particular task. There are several ways to do this. One is to have the student and the supervisor list the activities the student performs to accomplish a particular job. In the best of systems, the supervisor (with the possible help of co-workers, the personnel department, and perhaps the student) would then develop a rating scale based on various qualities of accomplishment of that task. Although the development of such rating scales takes time and energy, it would be particularly valuable for an agency that has a continual stream of student interns performing such tasks.

Let's take an example of the student intern who works in a public official's office. One typical task of such an intern is to answer the telephone and field constituent complaints and inquiries. This task can be accomplished at a number of different levels:

○ 1. The student could be expected to:
fail to answer the phone when assigned; answer in a curt, rude, cynical, or unhelpful manner; put off the constituent with excuses so as not to have to follow up; conceal errors.

○ 2. The student could be expected to:
answer the phone when assigned; respond in a curt or unhelpful manner; neglect to follow instructions for logging calls; fail to ask for supervisor help if unsure of appropriate response; conceal errors when they are made.

○ 3. The student could be expected to:
answer the phone in a polite way; fail to take down all necessary information for logging and problem resolution; fail to actively seek necessary additional information; fail to check to make sure information was heard correctly; guess at the problem and the solution; not generally discuss possible errors or problems with supervisor; be unclear about resources for referral or action.

○ 4. The student could be expected to:
answer the phone in a polite way; keep a detailed account of calls; check all information, including spelling and numbers, for accuracy; fail to establish priorities for dealing with constituent problems; take an unnecessarily long time in getting back to constituent; discuss possible problems and errors with supervisor; be knowledgeable about major resources for referral and action.

5. The student could be expected to:

answer the phone in an actively interested way; take down all necessary information; initiate questions to make sure problem or inquiry clear; check all facts; establish priorities for dealing with constituent problems; return calls in a timely manner; inform supervisor immediately if problems or errors arise; be knowledgeable about all resources for referral and action.

By establishing this sort of rating format for each basic task, evaluation can take on a specificity and clarity that makes it possible for a supervisor and student to discuss problem areas without depending on emotionally-clouded generalizations. It is certainly not feasible to ask each supervisor to develop ratings for all of a student's functions, but it might be possible to get a supervisor to consider several important functions. A good starting point would be to ask a supervisor to imagine, in as specific a way as possible, the best way someone could perform a task, the ordinary way, and the worst way, and then to place the student on the resulting scale according to his/her performance.

The issue of scales and rating formats brings up another major question of evaluation: how are we measuring? It is typical for a form (see Appendix A: UMCP form) to offer a set of categories: superior, very good, good, fair, poor, or a set of numbers (see Appendix F: unidentified form). In most cases, it is impossible for either the evaluator or any subsequent reader to tell whether this rating is supposed to be absolute--in comparison with some ideal--or comparative. Even if there is a forced comparison (better than 90% of ratees better than 60-80%, better

than 40-60%, etc.) it is difficult to avoid certain kinds of rater error:

Leniency Error - all ratees are rated too high

Central Tendency - all scores are bunched up

Halo Error - the rating is based on one good aspect of job performance rather than on independent ratings of all important aspects of job performance

Horn Effect - the rating is based on one bad aspect of job performance rather than on independent ratings of all important aspects of job performance

Latest Behavior - evaluation is based on the most recent impression

Spillover Effect - past ratings effect the present rating

Therefore, any sort of number or check-off system should be used with great caution.

Finally, we have to ask ourselves: what are we using this evaluation for? Performance appraisal systems are used by organizations for many different reasons: validating selection techniques; identifying promotion potential; assessing training needs; allocating rewards. The primary use of performance appraisal with students is, however, none of these; it is feedback, letting the student know what he/she has learned well, what problems are to be found in the student's performance, what sort of plan can be worked out to improve performance in future work experiences. A secondary use is, of course, giving a faculty member sufficient information with which to assign a grade. As I look back at the development of our form (see Appendix A: UMCP form) I can only

think of one primary motivation: convenience for evaluators. In making convenience our goal, we may have neglected the prupose of the process.

If the primary use of evaluation is for student feedback, we need, at the very least, to assure ourselves that the student has seen the evaluation and has discussed it with the supervisor. Our form (see Appendices A, E, B: UMCP, Delaware, San Francisco State) is typical in not requiring student signatures, although, of course, we expect that the student has had a face-to-face performance appraisal. Furthermore, most evaluation processes do not include a student self-evaluation. The Center on Aging at the University of Maryland does ask for such evaluation in a thoughtful and useful way (see Appendix C: Center on Aging form).

If we can assure feedback by incorporating it as an integral part of the system, it can come to be seen by both supervisor and student as an opportunity for personal growth and greater work satisfaction, rather than merely as the symbol of a grade or number or stamp of completion. That goal is not an easy one to accomplish. It is only realistic to assume that employers, especially those used to very brief, convenient forms, may object to the time needed and the kind of effort required to discuss the evaluation briefly with the student at the beginning of the internship, to complete it with the student midway through the internship, and to complete it again at the end of the internship. However, by working with employers to help them feel comfortable with the evaluation format, by explaining the qualitative difference between a substantial evaluation process and an evaluation form, and by promoting the evaluation process as something your program requires as an

important part of the student's work experience, most employers will participate seriously in the process.

Following is a draft of a form that I think begins to elicit the kind of responses both students and faculty need for the quality we are seeking. It incorporates evaluation of job performance, results, and personal traits, but attempts to separate those areas. It does not include general rating scales, although it does ask both the student and supervisor to place the student on scales of specific job performance. It asks student and supervisor to go through parallel thought-processes, joint comparisons, and specific discussions based on those comparisons. Finally, it gives all participants enough specific information to help them analyze what needs to be done to improve the student's performance in future work experience situations.

STUDENT EVALUATION FORM

As part of the internship/cooperative education process, the University of Maryland College Park expects that each student and supervisor will informally discuss the student's progress on an ongoing basis during the semester. This form merely provides a more formal opportunity for discussion and response. It should be completed midway through the semester, and again at the end.

For each section of this evaluation, the student and the supervisor will answer similar questions and will then discuss their answers. Opportunity for oral comment can be supplemented by student or supervisor in the "Comments" section.

I - JOB PERFORMANCE

Student	Supervisor
List the seven or eight most important tasks you do as part of your job, in order of priority.	List the seven or eight most important tasks the student does as part of his/her job, in order of priority.
For each of the most important four, describe, in as detailed a way as you can, three ways of performing that task: as perfectly as you can imagine, in an ordinary way, and as badly as you can imagine.	For each of the most important four, describe, in as detailed a way as you can, three ways of performing that task: as perfectly as you can imagine, in an ordinary way, and as badly as you can imagine.
After you've finished, describe the way you think you have done each task, and place it on a scale somewhere between the three alternatives.	After you've finished, describe the way the student has done each task, and place it on a scale somewhere between the three alternatives.
What do you think your outstanding strengths have been in your job performance?	Has the intern progressed at your expected rate in working effectively with decreasing amounts of supervision and in taking on responsibility for increasingly complex tasks?
Are there parts of your job that you didn't like or didn't think you were very good at?	
What skills, abilities, or special knowledge have you developed as a result of this internship?	What skills, abilities, or special knowledge has the student developed as a result of this internship?

After you have each finished these questions, compare your answers. Did you both see the same tasks as most important? Were your definitions of the tasks and how they were done similar or different? Did you vary greatly in your evaluations of how the student had done the work? Did you have similar lists of new skills, abilities, and knowledge?

II -RESULTS

Student	Supervisor
List your three most important educational goals for this experience. Did you fulfill them? Why or why not?	List what you understand the student's three most important educational goals to be in this internship. Did the student fulfill them? Why or why not?
List your three most important work goals. Did you reach them? Why or why not?	List what you believe the three most important work goals for the student have been. Do you think the student reached them? Why or why not?
If you have not reached a goal but have progressed toward it, what demonstrations do you have of this achievement?	Were there any organizational realities that made it impossible for the student to accomplish some of these goals?

After you have each finished these questions, compare your answers. Did you both have similar lists of goals for education and work? If results were seen differently, what were the reasons for those differences?

III - PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

What do you think were the three most important personal characteristics that helped you in this internship?	What do you think were the student's three most important personal characteristics that helped him/her in this internship?
Do you think that there were any personal characteristics that got in the way of your ability to work effectively and/or to get along with your co-workers?	Do you think there were any personal characteristics that might influence the intern's potential for success in a career related to the field in which the student has interned?

After you have each drawn up a list of personal characteristics, compare them and discuss any differences that have emerged.

Based on all three sections, what suggestions can you make jointly about ways to improve the student's effectiveness in future work situations? What changes can you suggest in the tasks themselves, or in the internship as a whole?

Student comments and signature:

Supervisor comments and signature:

Please attach answers to questions and return to:_____

OTHER RESOURCES

Although the model presented in this paper is not based on any particular theory of performance appraisal, it takes its inspiration from both practitioners and theorists who emphasize the motivational and developmental aspects of performance appraisal, rather than its use as a tool for salary administration.

The topic of performance appraisal tends to be a continually popular one, and articles on it are regularly published in the Harvard Business Review, Personnel, Personnel Journal, Personnel Psychology, Journal of Applied Psychology, and Management Review, as well as in popular business-oriented magazines such as Fortune and Business Week. A good starting point for exploration of the subject is Performance Appraisal: A Selected Chronological Bibliography--1948-1973, by R.S. Elster and G.L. Musgrave. The bibliography, #568 in the series of Council of Planning Librarians Exchange Bibliographies, is unfortunately not annotated, but it covers a wide range of appraisal-related topics.

The best complete book on the subject is considered by many professionals in the field to be Performance in Organizations: Determinants and Appraisal, by L.L. Cummings and D.P. Schwab (Scott Foresman, 1973). It tends to be complex and theory-based, so those not familiar with the field might prefer Performance Appraisal, edited by T.L. Whisler and S.F. Harper (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962). The book is a collection of essays that originally appeared in some of the journals mentioned above, as well as others prepared especially for the volume. You might assume that a 1962 volume would be outmoded, but most of the issues that were unresolved in the early '60's remain unresolved. One good article that explores some of the reasons for this irresolution is "Split Roles in Performance Appraisal," by H.H. Meyer, E. Kay, and J.R.P. French, Jr., Harvard Business Review, 43 (1965) 123-129.

Over the last few years, many personnel consultants have produced videotapes to train supervisors to conduct performance appraisals well. Although their quality varies enormously, they are useful to examine if you plan to coach work-site supervisors on appraisal techniques. College library non-print media centers may have a few available; rental fees are often prohibitive.

APPENDIX A University of Maryland College Park

SUPERVISOR'S FORM FOR EVALUATING STUDENT PERFORMANCE IN AN INTERNSHIP

Student's Name _____ Semester _____ Year _____

Student's Job Title _____

Supervisor's Name _____

Name of Organization _____

Address _____

SUPERVISOR: Please rate this student's performance in an internship with your agency. Your responses will be considered in assigning a grade for work performance in the field.

PERFORMANCE AREA (check one for each item)	Superior	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
Attendance/punctuality					
Attentiveness					
Working relationships with staff					
Acceptance of supervision/constructive criticism					
Demonstrated capacity to learn					
Professionalism					
Communication skills					
Motivation and initiative					
Competence					

OTHER COMMENTS _____

SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE _____ Date _____

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN THIS FORM TO:

Faculty Sponsor's Name _____

San Francisco State University
Department of Psychology

APPENDIX B

Final Evaluation of Student Intern

Student _____ Name and title of supervisor _____

Agency _____ Number of weeks worked _____

Average hours worked per week _____

This final evaluation of your student intern is designed to provide a process for identifying and assessing the student's learning and growth during this past semester in your agency. This evaluation is extremely important to the student. The instructor will use it as a tool to evaluate the student's fieldwork experience learning. Please indicate which rating standard you used in this evaluation, whether you compared the student to his/her entry level skills, other undergraduate students you have had, or beginning level staff members.

DIRECTIONS FOR RATINGS:

Please record the student's degree of effectiveness by writing the appropriate number (1-5) in the blank before each question. Use a 0 if there has been no opportunity to observe the skill or if it is not relevant to the field setting.

1	2	3	4	5
somewhat ineffective	minimally effective	moderately effective	very effective	highly effective

I Relations With Others

____ 1. Ability to communicate with staff

____ 2. Ability to communicate with clients

Comments _____

_____

II Supervision

____ 1. Ability to utilize supervision constructively

____ 2. Openness to criticism

____ 3. Seeking and using help

Comments _____

_____

III Personal Qualities

____ 1. Decision making

____ 2. Trust and confidentiality

____ 3. Initiative

____ 4. Creativity

____ 5. Dependability

____ 6. Ability to learn

____ 7. Sensitivity to professional ethics

Comments _____

_____

IV Skills

____ 1. Ability to utilize direction
____ 2. Analyzing problems
____ 3. Counseling
____ 4. Effective listening
____ 5. Nonverbal communication
____ 6. Organizing and carrying out assignments
____ 7. Self evaluation
____ 8. Verbal communication

Comments_____

_____

V General

____ 1. Attitude toward work performed
____ 2. Acts appropriately to his/her role in agency
____ 3. Contribution to agency
4. Overall quality of performance
____ -At the beginning of the placement
____ -At the end of the placement

Comments_____

_____

What are the student's strengths?

_____

_____

In what areas does the student need improvement?

_____

_____

Please use the following scale to answer the next three questions.

Not at all Beyond expectations
1 2 3 4 5

____ 1. To what extent did the student meet the goals/objectives of the initial contract/agreement?
____ 2. To what extent did the student fulfill the supervisor's expectations?
____ 3. Considering the student's individual change, how would you rate his/her progress?
4. Would you be willing to take this student again? yes/no/maybe
5. Should the student pursue a career in this field?

Uncertain Very Definitely
1 2 3 4 5

Please return the completed evaluation to Rosemarie Bowler, Dept. of Psychology, San Francisco State University, San Francisco, Ca. 94132. Thank you.

APPENDIX C

Graduate Gerontology Certificate Program
Center on Aging
University of Maryland

Semester _____ Year _____

FIELD PLACEMENT
STUDENT SELF-EVALUATION

NAME _____ TELEPHONE _____

AGENCY _____

SITE SUPERVISOR _____

1. a. Evaluate your progress toward fulfilling the job responsibilities delineated in the Education - Work Plan.

   b. Evaluate your progress toward fulfilling the educational goals in the Education- Work Plan.

   c. Evaluate your progress toward fulfilling the career goals in the Education-Work Plan.

2. What do you perceive were the benefits of your experience for:

   a. The agency

   b. The client group

   c. Yourself

3. What academic background did you find valuable in completing the practicum?

4. Did you find any prior work experiences valuable during the practicum?

   Explain.

5. What did you learn from the practicum regarding additional coursework which might be to your advantage as a professional in the field of aging?

6. a. What was the most positive experience of the practicum? Explain.

   b. What was the most difficult experience of the practicum? Explain.

7. Describe your suggestions for improving the practicum experience.

Side one

EVALUATION OF STUDENT

Please rate _____ on each of the characteristics
Student's Name
listed by checking the appropriate box. In the section for comments, list any strengths or weaknesses of the student that you feel are important.

Characteristics	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average	N/A: Can't Rate	Comments
1) Desire and willingness to take on new assignments						
2) Potential for further development						
3) Concern for needs of community						
4) Willingness to work through an assignment to completion						
5) Ability to communicate with community residents						
6) Imaginativeness and resourcefulness						
7) Cooperation - Willingness to get along with others						
8) Overall evaluation of performance						

Did the student meet ____ exceed ____ fall below ____ (check on appropriate line) your expectations?
Other comments:

I have seen this evaluation and agree with it.

_____
Signed (Project Coordinator)

_____
Date

_____
Signed (Student)

APPENDIX E

Field Experience Program
Agency Evaluation of Student

CAREER PLANNING AND PLACEMENT OFFICE

University of Delaware
Raub Hall
Newark, Delaware 19711
738-1231

STUDENT'S NAME _____ DATE _____

Please complete this evaluation for each student involved with your agency this semester or session. A copy will be kept on file and one will be sent to the student. Evaluate the student objectively comparing him or her with other students of comparable academic level, and with other personnel assigned the same or similar responsibilities, or with your individual standards.

	Outstanding	Above Average	Average	Fair	Poor	Unable to Judge	Comments
Ability to work with people							
Dependability							
Resourcefulness							
Leadership							
Initiative							
Maturity							
Ability to make decisions							
Interest and enthusiasm							
Ability to learn							
Creativity							
Overall performance							

What was the student's job description? _____

_____

Attendance: ( ) Regular ( ) Irregular Punctuality: ( ) Regular ( ) Irregular

Total number of hours worked: _____

Additional Comments:

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Evaluation by: _____ Organization: _____

APPENDIX F

		COMMENTS
Ability to motivate others	1 2 3 4 5	
Ability to work without supervision	1 2 3 4 5	
Ability to express self orally	1 2 3 4 5	
Ability to express self in writing	1 2 3 4 5	
Ability to make and meet deadlines	1 2 3 4 5	
Self-discipline	1 2 3 4 5	
Decision-making	1 2 3 4 5	
Using the telephone effectively	1 2 3 4 5	
Other skills specific to student's assignments	1 2 3 4 5	
Sense of responsibility to organization and internship	1 2 3 4 5	
Ability to work with the public	1 2 3 4 5	
Adherence to agency rules	1 2 3 4 5	
Seriousness of purpose	1 2 3 4 5	
Poise	1 2 3 4 5	
Courtesy	1 2 3 4 5	
Enthusiasm	1 2 3 4 5	
Efficiency	1 2 3 4 5	
Ability to handle the unexpected	1 2 3 4 5	
Ability to use criticism constructively	1 2 3 4 5	
Adaptability and flexibility	1 2 3 4 5	

Based on the above assessments, I recommend that the student receive the following grade:

(__) A+ (__) A (__) A- (__) B+ (__) B (__) B- (__) C+

(__) C (__) Less than C

NAME OF SUPERVISOR_____DATE_____

Thank you for your assistance and cooperation.